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MONSTRESS™ ISSUE 9

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THE MONSTRESS STORY SO FAR...

With the help of the Brothers Imura, old friends of Maika's mother, Maika and her companions set sail for the Isle of Bones. There, Maika hoped to use a mysterious bone key to uncover the secrets of her mother's life and obsession with the legendary Shaman-Empress.

Unfortunately, smooth sailing was not on the agenda. Maika clashed with the ship's crew, to the disapproval of the captain, Syryssa, and even the hardiest sailors, like the tiger Arcanic Jan and the elderly, sharkish Old Tooth, grew suspicious of Maika's quest. Then, partway through the journey, the Monstrum in Maika's body awakened, forcing Maika to dive into the ocean to appease the Monstrum's hunger before it could target sailors. Soaked and exhausted, Maika finally returned to her quarters — and found herself in the blast radius of an exploding grenade!

THE PLAYERS...

MAIKA An Arcanic teen who survived the Great War, and slavery at the hands of the Cumaean witch nuns. Ruthless and haunted, she is determined to uncover the truth behind her mother's murder — and her mother's secrets — in the hope that she can free herself from an ancient and dangerous god called a Monstrum that is imprisoned inside her body and fills her with an otherworldly hunger for human flesh. In her current possession are two clues to her past: a photograph, and a fragment of a mask that many would kill to possess.

MONSTRUM A mysterious, primordial being of tremendous power that shares Maika's body and mind, and fights her for control. Once considered a god, and drawn into this world by the Shaman-Empress, this Monstrum is driven by a deadly hunger, consuming the lives of humans and Arcanics alike, leaving only their desiccated corpses behind. Though it may give the impression that its only wish is to survive, there's far more to this creature, and its desires, than meets the eye…

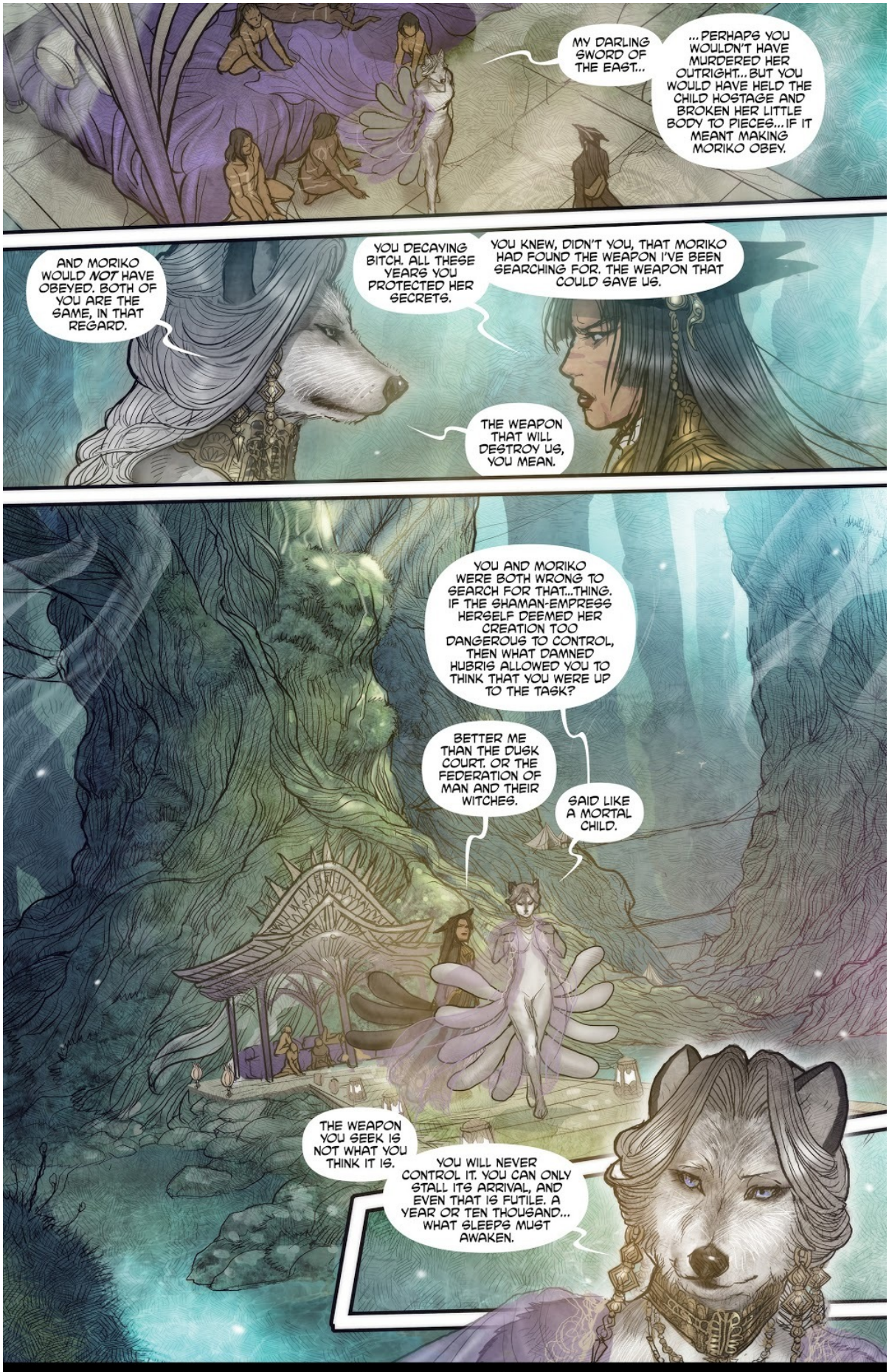
REN An enigmatic nekomancer cat with mysterious motives, he is one of Maika's companions on her journey, and perhaps an agent of the Dusk Court — or some greater power.

KIPPA An Arcanic fox girl saved from slavery by Maika. Innocent and optimistic, she is frightened by the Monstrum — but trusts Maika and will bravely defend her and others by rushing into battles too dangerous for a child.

MORIKO Maika's mother, an Arcanic, whose obsession with uncovering the secrets of the greatest Arcanic ancestor, the Shaman-Empress, led to her betrayal and murder. Her reputation as a woman of single-minded drive and intellectual brilliance has only grown since her death.

SEIZI An Arcanic hybrid and former pirate who has amassed a fortune with his brother Kenzi, he is fiercely loyal to his goddess-daughter, Maika. During his days of piracy, he knew Moriko Halfwolf well — and brought her to dangerous lands in her relentless quest to find answers about the Shaman-Empress.

WHY YES...
...I MOST CERTAINLY PREVENTED YOU AND YOUR SPIES FROM DISCOVERING YOUR SISTER HAD A CHILD.
YOU'RE A FOOL IF YOU THINK I'D DO LESS THAN PROTECT MY ONLY LIVING GRANDCHILD FROM YOUR... IMPULSES.
YOU THOUGHT I WOULD MURDER MY OWN NIECE.


MY DARLING SWORD OF THE EAST...
...PERHAPS YOU WOULDN'T HAVE MURDERED HER OUTRIGHT... BUT YOU WOULD HAVE HELD THE CHILD HOSTAGE AND BROKEN HER LITTLE BODY TO PIECES... IF IT MEANT MAKING MORIKO OBEY.
AND MORIKO WOULD *NOT* HAVE OBEYED. BOTH OF YOU ARE THE SAME, IN THAT REGARD.
YOU DECAYING BITCH. ALL THESE YEARS YOU PROTECTED HER SECRETS.
YOU KNEW, DIDN'T YOU, THAT MORIKO HAD FOUND THE WEAPON I'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR. THE WEAPON THAT COULD SAVE US.
THE WEAPON THAT WILL DESTROY US, YOU MEAN.
YOU AND MORIKO WERE BOTH WRONG TO SEARCH FOR THAT...THING. IF THE SHAMAN-EMPRESS HERSELF DEEMED HER CREATION TOO DANGEROUS TO CONTROL, THEN WHAT DAMNED HUBRIS ALLOWED YOU TO THINK THAT YOU WERE UP TO THE TASK?
BETTER ME THAN THE DUSK COURT. OR THE FEDERATION OF MAN AND THEIR WITCHES.
SAID LIKE A MORTAL CHILD.
THE WEAPON YOU SEEK IS NOT WHAT YOU THINK IT IS.
YOU WILL NEVER CONTROL IT. YOU CAN ONLY STALL ITS ARRIVAL, AND EVEN THAT IS FUTILE. A YEAR OR TEN THOUSAND... WHAT SLEEPS MUST AWAKEN.

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HOW IT AWAKENS, HOWEVER... AND WHO DOES THE WAKING...
NOW THAT MIGHT MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MOST DEAD... AND ALL DEAD.
BUT YOU, MY DEAR, ARE MOSTLY IRRELEVANT TO EITHER OUTCOME.
YOU TALK LIKE THIS WEAPON IS A LIVING THING. IT'S JUST A MASK.
AND NOW THE DUSK COURT HAS BROKEN ITS SILENCE. THEY FOUND MORIKO'S DAUGHTER... AND SURELY THE WEAPON MY SISTER GAVE HER.
MY POOR DEAR. HOW LITTLE YOU KNOW.
I SUPPOSE I PUT YOU AT A DISADVANTAGE WHEN I BOUGHT ALL YOUR SPIES. YOUR BRILLIANCE, I'M AFRAID, DOES NOT EXTEND FAR BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELD.
IF ONLY YOUR SISTER WAS STILL ALIVE.
THIS IS HER FAULT, AFTER ALL.
YOU --
NO, YOU WILL NOT SPEAK.
AN ENVOY OF THE DUSK COURT IS COMING HERE TO DISCUSS HOW WE MIGHT ALLY OURSELVES IN OUR COMMON GOAL OF CONTAINING THIS... WEAPON... YOU SO DESIRE.
IN FACT, I BELIEVE SHE'S ALREADY ARRIVED. SO DO BE POLITE. SHE KNOWS MORE ABOUT MORIKO'S DAUGHTER THAN ANYONE ALIVE.

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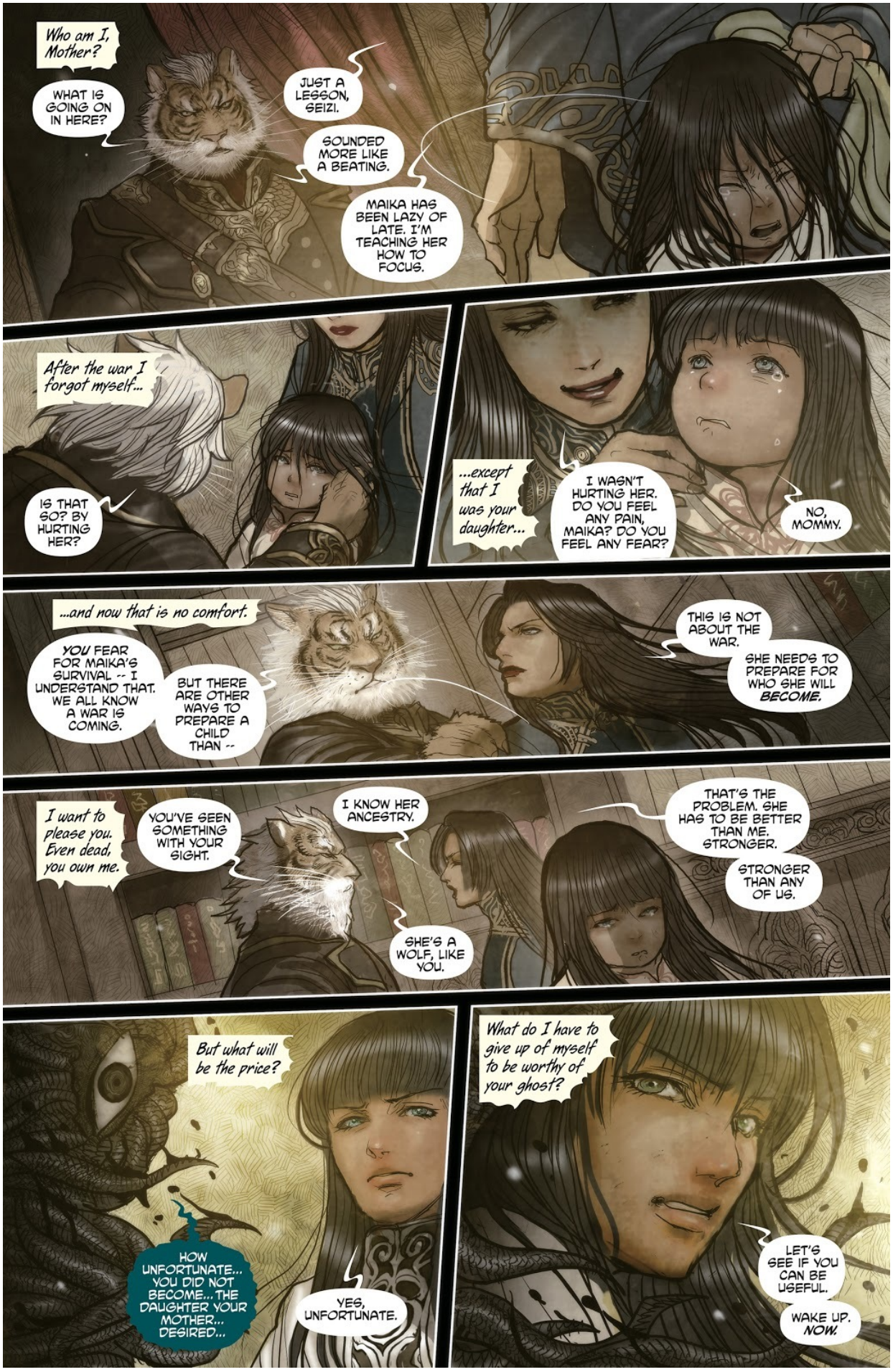
THE BARONESS OF THE LAST DUSK.
WELCOME TO THE DAWN COURT.

There are some things I wish I could forget. You know what they are, Mother.
...MEMORIES... SLIPPING AWAY FROM ME...
You would call me ungrateful. And maybe...you would be right.
I'm alive, after all.
...WHAT... ARE YOU... SUPPOSED TO BE...?
...YOU... LOOK... FAMILIAR...
That's all that ever mattered to you.
...NOT THAT I HAVE... ANY PRIVACY... TO REMEMBER...
I always told myself you wanted me to survive because you loved me...
SHUT YOUR EYES. NOW.
Now I doubt love had anything to do with it.
AND TELL ME HOW YOU WOULD KILL SOMEONE.

Who are you to me, really?
YOU HAVE THIRTY SECONDS.
THE PEN. I COULD STAB SOMEONE IN THE EYES OR THROAT.
And who am I...
THIS COULD BREAK SOMEONE'S FACE. CRUSH SKULLS, SMASH BRAINS.
...if not even you loved me...
THE BOOKS... I COULD THROW THEM? MAYBE THE... THE INK...
...if I was just part of a plan...
...a vision...
YOU'RE NOT THINKING. SEE THAT SCARF? DO YOU?
WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH IT AFTER YOU'VE DISABLED YOUR OPPONENT?
=GASP=
I DON'T KNOW!
THUNK
THAT IS NOT AN ACCEPTABLE ANSWER.
...an outcome...
...that you manipulated into existence?
YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS FEELS LIKE... WHAT IT'S CAPABLE OF DOING...
S-STOP! MOMMY =GAK= PLEASE!
...PERHAPS THEN YOU WON'T FORGET IT'S A TOOL TO BE USED...


Who am I, Mother?
WHAT IS GOING ON IN HERE?
JUST A LESSON, SEIZI.
SOUNDED MORE LIKE A BEATING.
MAIKA HAS BEEN LAZY OF LATE. I'M TEACHING HER HOW TO FOCUS.
After the war I forgot myself...
IS THAT SO? BY HURTING HER?
...except that I was your daughter...
I WASN'T HURTING HER. DO YOU FEEL ANY PAIN, MAIKA? DO YOU FEEL ANY FEAR?
NO, MOMMY.
...and now that is no comfort.
YOU FEAR FOR MAIKA'S SURVIVAL -- I UNDERSTAND THAT. WE ALL KNOW A WAR IS COMING.
BUT THERE ARE OTHER WAYS TO PREPARE A CHILD THAN --
THIS IS NOT ABOUT THE WAR.
SHE NEEDS TO PREPARE FOR WHO SHE WILL BECOME.
I want to please you. Even dead, you own me.
YOU'VE SEEN SOMETHING WITH YOUR SIGHT.
I KNOW HER ANCESTRY.
SHE'S A WOLF, LIKE YOU.
THAT'S THE PROBLEM. SHE HAS TO BE BETTER THAN ME. STRONGER.
STRONGER THAN ANY OF US.
But what will be the price?
HOW UNFORTUNATE... YOU DID NOT BECOME... THE DAUGHTER YOUR MOTHER... DESIRED...
YES, UNFORTUNATE.
What do I have to give up of myself to be worthy of your ghost?
LET'S SEE IF YOU CAN BE USEFUL.
WAKE UP. NOW.

HALFWOLF! STOP!
WHAT... NOW...? AND WHY... ARE YOU INJURED?
THE MASK AND KEY WERE STOLEN. CAN YOU SENSE WHERE THEY ARE?
FOOLISH GIRL... I WARNED YOU...
CAN YOU DO IT?
...CAN YOU NOT... HEAR... THAT HUM...?
BELOW US...
I THOUGHT THAT WAS MY STOMACH.
GODDESS...
OLD TOOTH! GET THE HALFWOLF BEFORE THOSE INJURIES KILL HER!

WE MUST HURRY.
CAPTAIN WILL BE CALLING FOR THE ENTIRE CREW AFTER THE BLAST. DAMNED SHORT TRICK COULD HAVE WARNED US. HE BETTER HAVE KILLED THE GIRL.
ALL THIS TROUBLE TO KEEP THE HALFWOLF AWAY FROM THE ISLE OF BONES.
OUR MASTER SHOULD HAVE DESTROYED MORIKO ALL THOSE YEARS AGO, BEFORE HER DAUGHTER COULD BE BORN.
BUT HE WAS TOO AFRAID.
CAREFUL. SHORT TRICK WILL HEAR YOU AND TELL HIM. WHAT THE MONKEY HEARS, OUR MASTER HEARS.
YOU WON'T GET A NEW BODY -- AND THAT ONE IS ALREADY DYING AROUND YOU.
BAH. WE'LL SMUGGLE THESE RELICS STRAIGHT INTO HIS HANDS. HE'LL BE TOO PLEASED TO DENY US FRESH SKINS.
THEY SAY... TOUCHING THE MASK GIVES YOU A GLIMPSE OF THE OTHER SIDE. THAT YOU CAN HEAR THE VOICE.
DON'T BE A FOOL... THAT'S NOT MEANT FOR US. WE MUST SERVE. WE MUST OBEY. NEVER FORGET THAT.
WHO WOULD KNOW? AND IF THE DOOR WERE TO OPEN... IF WE WERE THE ONES TO FREE OUR GODS...
...DON'T PRETEND YOU CAN'T ALREADY HEAR THE WHISPER...
IGNORE IT...
...IT'S THE FIRST SONG... THE SUSURRUS OF DEFILING...
I... HEAR ...SWEET BLASPHEMIES...
...BUT YOU... WILL SING IT... NOT.
SPLAT!

GREATEST DESTROYER... YOU... YOU ARE RISEN!
BASE VERMIN... YOU DARE... CONSPIRE... AGAINST MY HOST... SWIFT COMES... YOUR ANNIHILATION...
FORGIVE US, MASTER OF WOES!
WE WOULD NEVER... NEVER HAVE DARED IF WE'D KNOWN!
OH... HOW I DESPISE... UNTRUTHS...
WHAT IS THIS THING? ONE OF YOU?
...AS A WORM... IS TO YOU... PERHAPS...
...IT IS A RELIC... FROM OUR DAYS OF FREEDOM... SHADOWS THAT ONCE SERVED US... IN HUNTING MORTALS... DURING THE WAR...
...WE WOULD GIVE THEM... BODIES IN REWARD... BUT THEY WERE SPITEFUL... FULL OF ENVY... ALWAYS DESIRING MORE... THAN THEIR PLACE...
FOOL... A COMPULSION HAS BEEN... PLACED UPON IT...
...SUCH WEAK CREATURES... SO EASILY CONTROLLED...
HEAR ME, DESTROYER! DO NOT GO TO THAT ISLAND! YOUR DIVINE LIFE WILL BE IN DANGER! THE LORD OF CARRION WILL TRAP YOU. HE WILL USE YOU TO ESCAPE HIS CHAINS --
I CANNOT BE USED... BY ANYONE...
WHO SENT YOU? WAS IT THE CREATURE WHO LIVES INSIDE THE WITCH?
TELL ME!
W-WHAT WITCH?
I CAN'T... I... G-G-GAAK-K-K...
WHY DO YOU KNOW MY MOTHER'S NAME?
SHE WAS KNOWN -- ƧKKGGAKƨ -- TO OUR MASTER...
MAIKA! I KNOW YOU'RE DOWN THERE!
FUCK.

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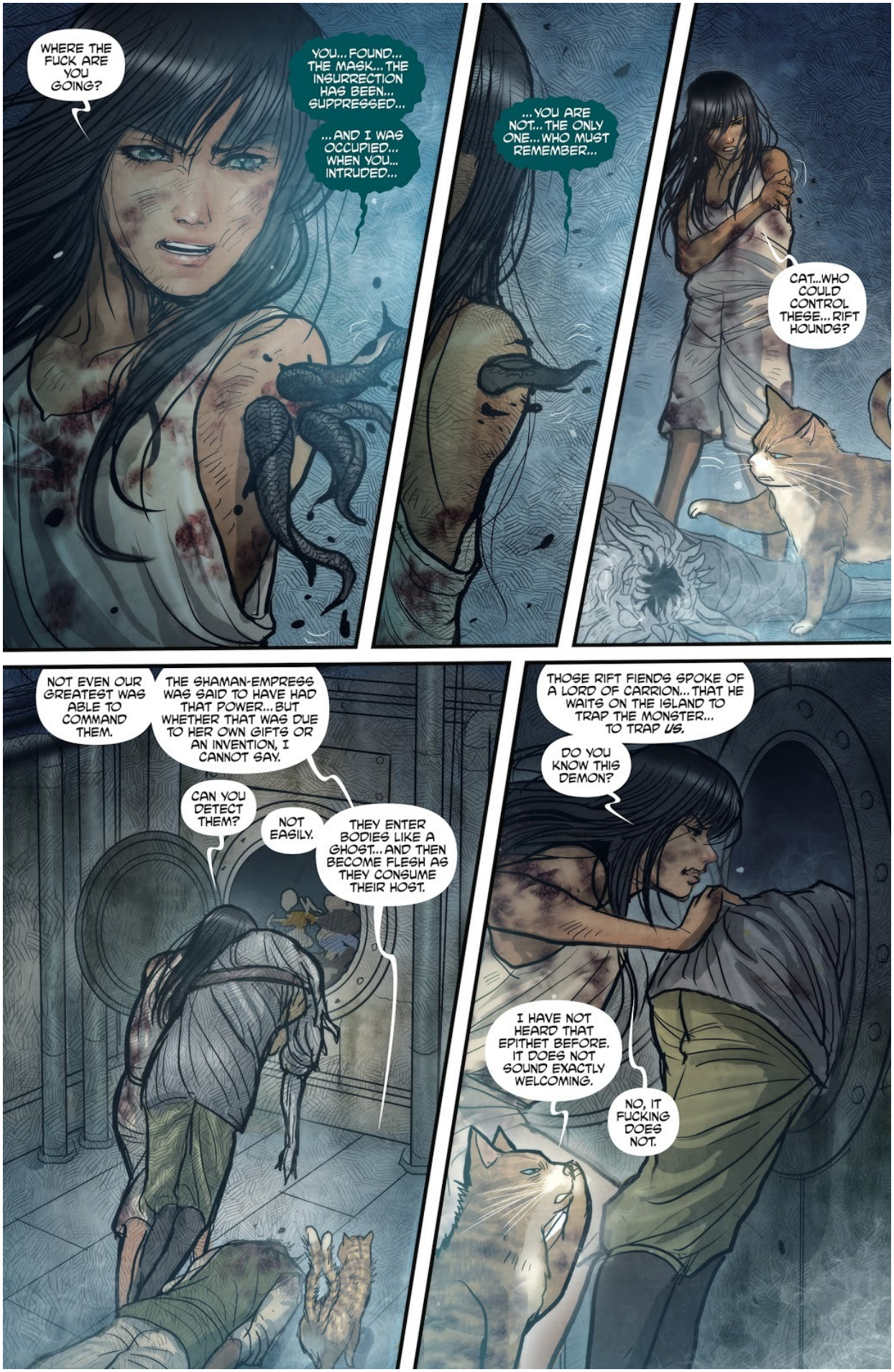
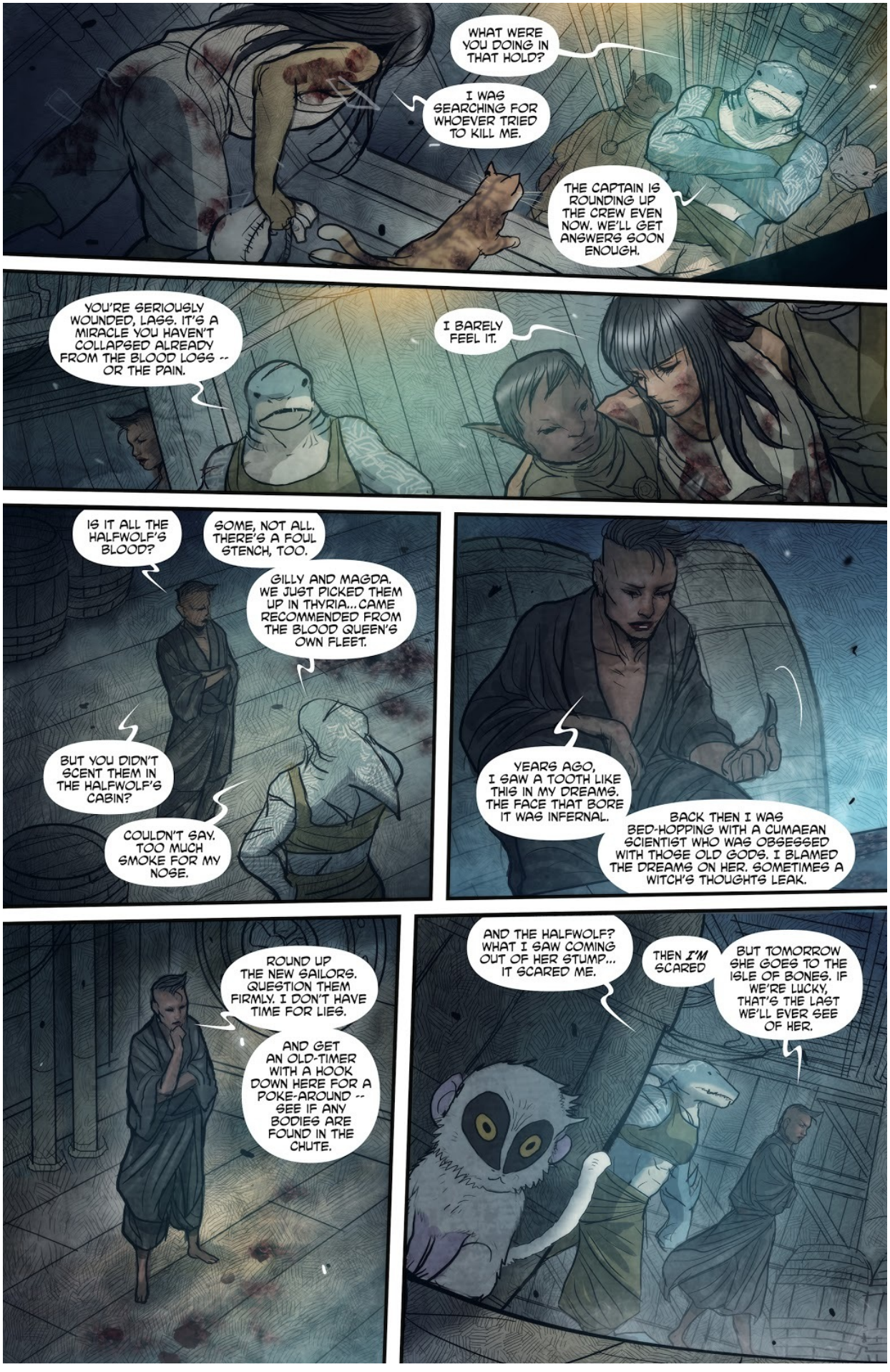
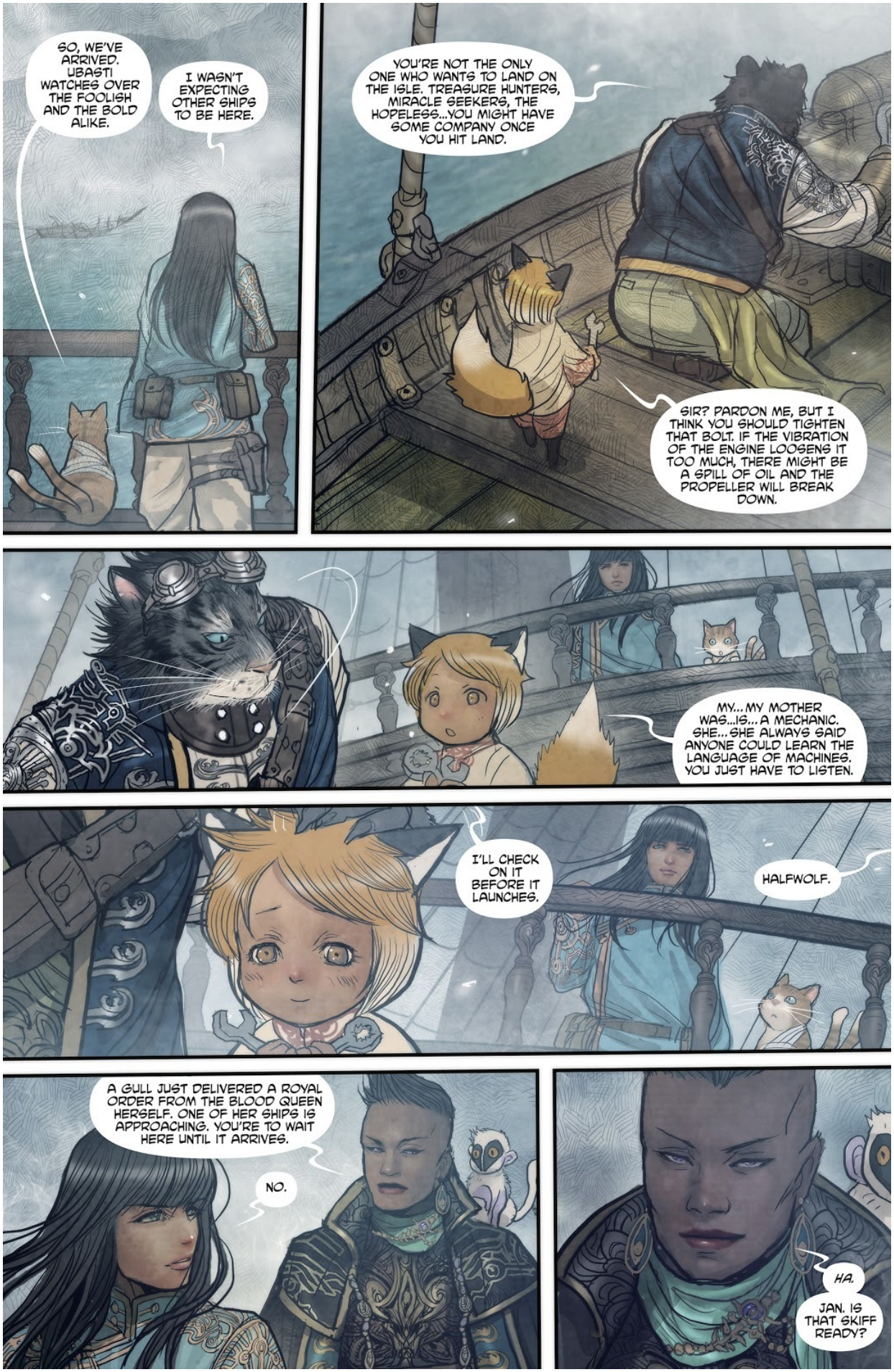
OH, UBASTI. DELIVER US.
A RIFT FIEND... HERE... AND FREE...
KILL... KILL -- KILL!
YOU'LL DIE FIRST, HOUND.
SNARL!
URK!
THIS... GROWS... WEARISOME...
KILL IT, HALFWOLF!
YOU'VE SEEN THIS CREATURE BEFORE?
OUR MOST ANCIENT ENEMY? OF COURSE I HAVE.
IN THE TEMPLE IN ARKANGELUS THERE'S A ROOM WHERE WE KEEP THEIR HEADS PICKLED IN JARS.
UBASTI'S SOLDIERS IMPRISONED THE RIFT HOUNDS AFTER THE GREAT WAR OF THE GODS... BUT THEY ALWAYS FIND WAYS OF ESCAPING.
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE? WE NEEDED TO KEEP QUESTIONING THAT THING!
...TO WHAT... PURPOSE...? IT HAD REACHED... THE END... OF ITS UTILITY...
IT KNEW WHAT WAS WAITING FOR US ON THE ISLAND --

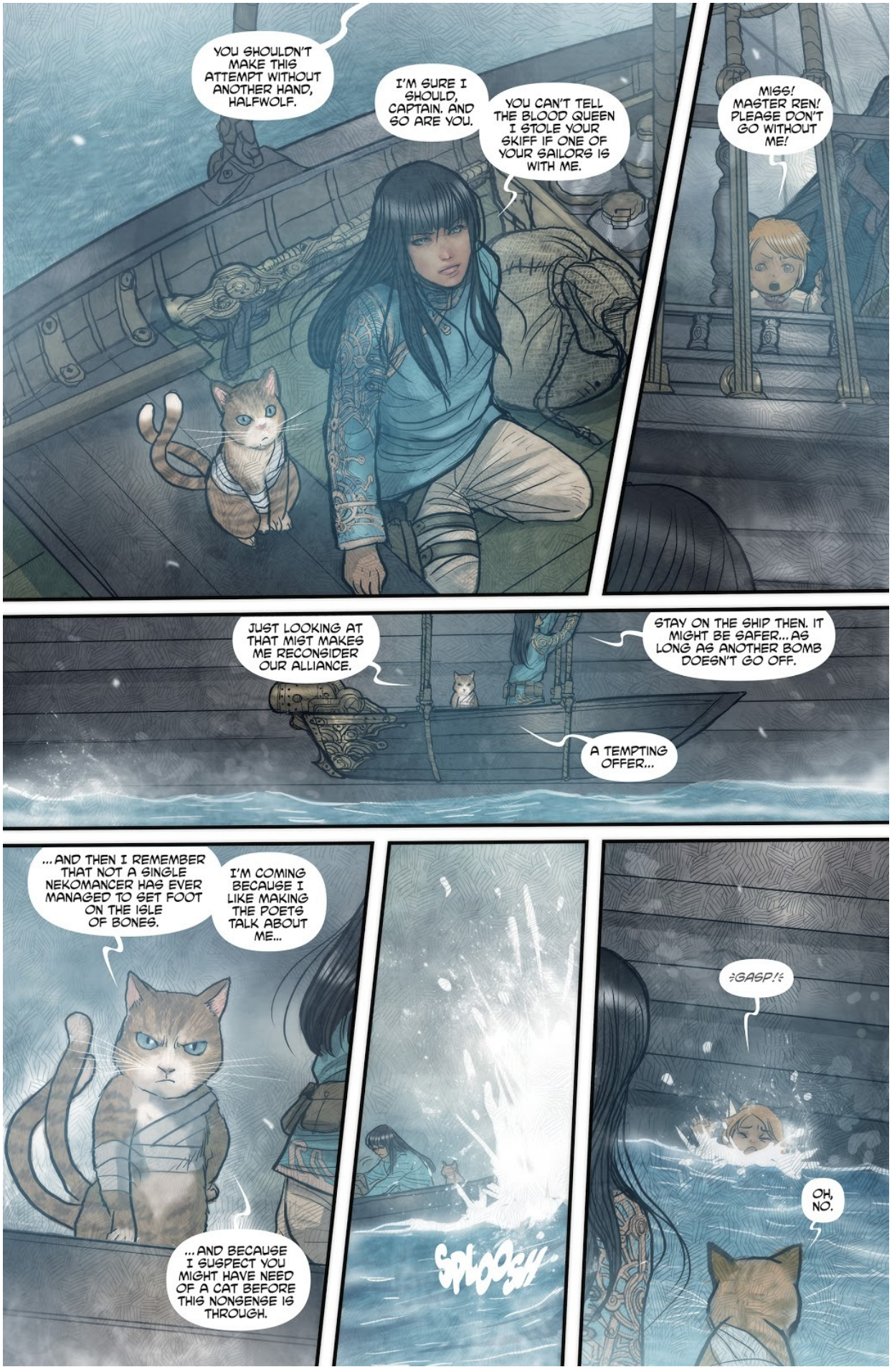

WHERE THE FUCK ARE YOU GOING?
YOU... FOUND... THE MASK... THE INSURRECTION HAS BEEN... SUPPRESSED...
...AND I WAS OCCUPIED... WHEN YOU... INTRUDED...
...YOU ARE NOT... THE ONLY ONE... WHO MUST REMEMBER...
CAT...WHO COULD CONTROL THESE... RIFT HOUNDS?
NOT EVEN OUR GREATEST WAS ABLE TO COMMAND THEM.
THE SHAMAN-EMPRESS WAS SAID TO HAVE HAD THAT POWER... BUT WHETHER THAT WAS DUE TO HER OWN GIFTS OR AN INVENTION, I CANNOT SAY.
CAN YOU DETECT THEM?
NOT EASILY.
THEY ENTER BODIES LIKE A GHOST... AND THEN BECOME FLESH AS THEY CONSUME THEIR HOST.
THOSE RIFT FIENDS SPOKE OF A LORD OF CARRION... THAT HE WAITS ON THE ISLAND TO TRAP THE MONSTER... TO TRAP *US.*
DO YOU KNOW THIS DEMON?
I HAVE NOT HEARD THAT EPITHET BEFORE. IT DOES NOT SOUND EXACTLY WELCOMING.
NO, IT FUCKING DOES NOT.

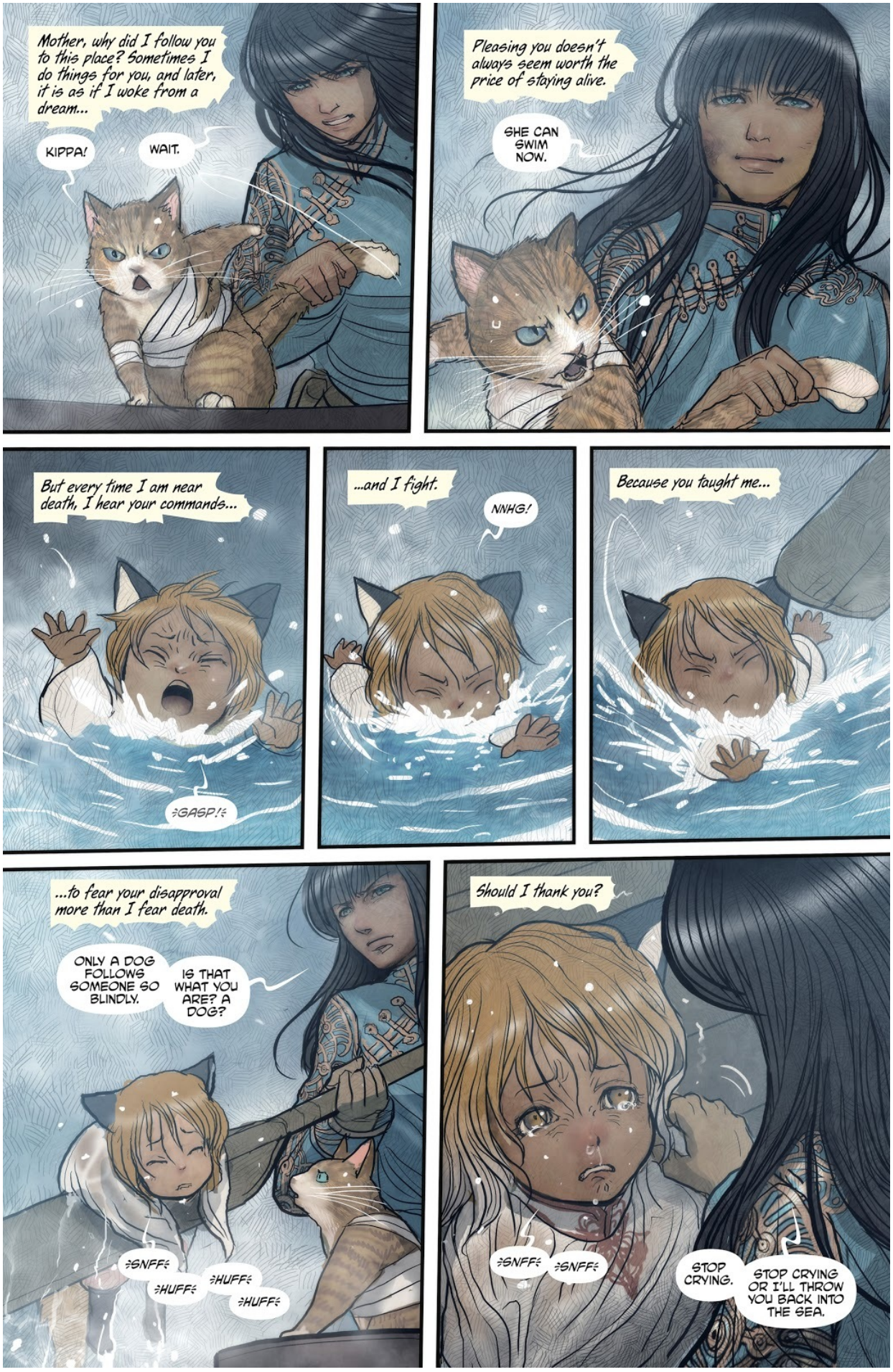

WHAT WERE YOU DOING IN THAT HOLD?
I WAS SEARCHING FOR WHOEVER TRIED TO KILL ME.
THE CAPTAIN IS ROUNDING UP THE CREW EVEN NOW. WE'LL GET ANSWERS SOON ENOUGH.
YOU'RE SERIOUSLY WOUNDED, LASS. IT'S A MIRACLE YOU HAVEN'T COLLAPSED ALREADY FROM THE BLOOD LOSS -- OR THE PAIN.
I BARELY FEEL IT.
IS IT ALL THE HALFWOLF'S BLOOD?
SOME, NOT ALL. THERE'S A FOUL STENCH, TOO.
GILLY AND MAGDA. WE JUST PICKED THEM UP IN THYRIA... CAME RECOMMENDED FROM THE BLOOD QUEEN'S OWN FLEET.
BUT YOU DIDN'T SCENT THEM IN THE HALFWOLF'S CABIN?
COULDN'T SAY. TOO MUCH SMOKE FOR MY NOSE.
YEARS AGO, I SAW A TOOTH LIKE THIS IN MY DREAMS. THE FACE THAT BORE IT WAS INFERNAL.
BACK THEN I WAS BED-HOPPING WITH A CUMAEAN SCIENTIST WHO WAS OBSESSED WITH THOSE OLD GODS. I BLAMED THE DREAMS ON HER. SOMETIMES A WITCH'S THOUGHTS LEAK.
ROUND UP THE NEW SAILORS. QUESTION THEM FIRMLY. I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR LIES.
AND GET AN OLD-TIMER WITH A HOOK DOWN HERE FOR A POKE-AROUND -- SEE IF ANY BODIES ARE FOUND IN THE CHUTE.
AND THE HALFWOLF? WHAT I SAW COMING OUT OF HER STUMP... IT SCARED ME.
THEN I'M SCARED
BUT TOMORROW SHE GOES TO THE ISLE OF BONES. IF WE'RE LUCKY, THAT'S THE LAST WE'LL EVER SEE OF HER.

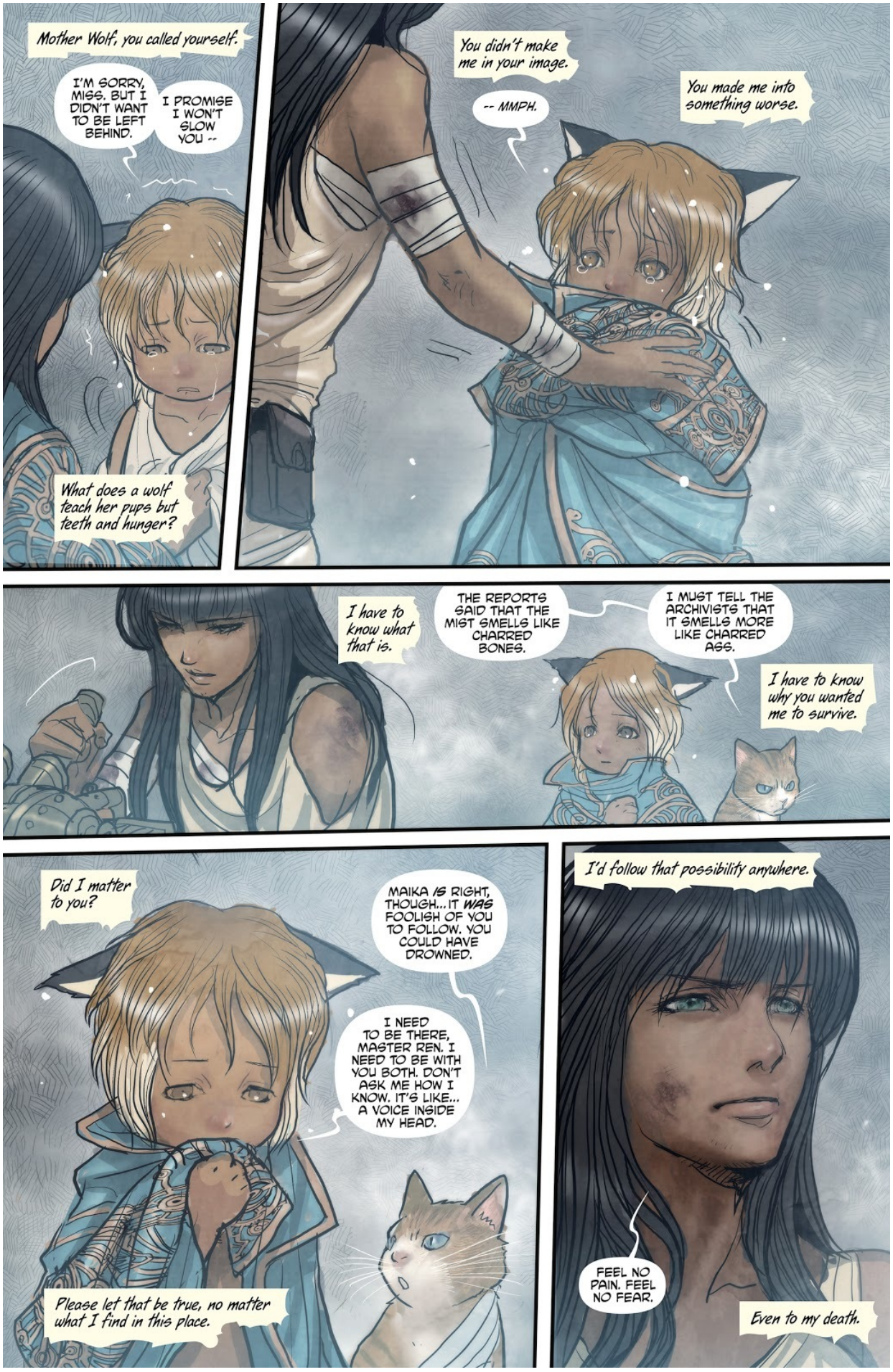
PLEASE FORGIVE MY LATENESS, BUT THERE WAS ANOTHER MURDER NEAR OUR WAREHOUSE. THE GHOUL KILLER, THEY CALL HIM... GIVEN THE STATE OF THE CORPSE.
BUT DO TRY THIS WHISKEY FROM GRIM HAVEN. I'M TOLD IT CAN MAKE A DARK WORLD BRIGHT.
THE LAST TIME WE DRANK TOGETHER, MORIKO WAS PREPARING FOR HER GREAT EXPEDITION.
NOW HER DAUGHTER HAS RETURNED. AND WITH HER, TROUBLE. WITH THE HALFWOLFS, IT IS ALWAYS TROUBLE.
SOMETIMES THAT'S THE PRICE OF FRIENDSHIP.
A PRICE MY PEOPLE CAN NO LONGER AFFORD...THYRIA WAS ALMOST LOST DURING THE WAR, SEIZI.
IT WILL BE ANOTHER GENERATION BEFORE WE REGAIN OUR FORMER STRENGTH, BUT WE DON'T HAVE THE LUXURY OF TIME. WE NEED WEAPONS, ALLIANCES... AND WE NEED THEM NOW.
WAR WITH THE FEDERATION IS COMING. THE WITCHES ARE COMING. FOR OUR LAND, FOR THE LILIUM IN OUR BONES.
BUT PERHAPS WE HAVE A BARGAINING CHIP.
MAIKA IS THE GRANDDAUGHTER OF THE QUEEN OF WOLVES. HER AUNT IS THE WARLORD OF THE DAWN COURT. NO MATTER HOW HUMAN SHE LOOKS, SHE IS ONLY TWO GENERATIONS REMOVED FROM THE MOST POWERFUL ANCIENT STILL ALIVE.
THE WITCHES WOULD PAY DEARLY FOR ONE LIKE HER. THEY MIGHT EVEN LET US BE.
I'VE HEARD SCHEMES LIKE THESE BEFORE. THEY NEVER END WELL.
THEN I'LL RANSOM THE HALFWOLF TO HER MOTHER'S PEOPLE.
THE DAWN COURT WOULD TAKE THAT AS AN ACT OF WAR. THE QUEEN OF WOLVES WOULD BECOME PERSONALLY INVOLVED. EVEN IN HER DECLINE SHE IS A MOST TERRIBLE FOE.
NO ANCIENT HAS AS MUCH POWER AS MY OWN RIGHT HAND, SEIZI. THEY'RE DOOMED CREATURES.
ARE THEY? I WONDER.
SEIZI IS RIGHT, MY LOVE. WE CANNOT SELL NOR RANSOM MAIKA HALFWOLF.
BUT WE CAN STILL USE HER.

THE HALFWOLF SAILS TO THE ISLE OF BONES. THERE SHE WILL FIND THE MASTER OF THAT TERRIBLE MADNESS. IF OUR NIECE DOESN'T CATCH UP TO HER FIRST.
DID YOU ACTUALLY MEET HIM, SEIZI?
I DID NOT HAVE THAT PLEASURE, YOUR HIGHNESS. ONLY MORIKO VENTURED INTO THE HEART OF THE ISLE.
SO VERY FEW HAVE PIERCED THE ISLAND'S MISTS. AND FEWER STILL HAVE FACED THE LORD OF CARRION AND SURVIVED TO TELL THAT TALE.
HE IS A MOST EXACTING HOST.
WE SHOULD NOT ASSUME THAT THE HALFWOLF WILL RETURN. DAUGHTERS ARE NOT ALWAYS THE EQUALS OF THEIR MOTHERS.
BUT IF BY SOME MIRACLE SHE DOES SURVIVE, WE WILL HAVE OPTIONS.
YES, INDEED.


SO, WE'VE ARRIVED. UBASTI WATCHES OVER THE FOOLISH AND THE BOLD ALIKE.
I WASN'T EXPECTING OTHER SHIPS TO BE HERE.
YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO WANTS TO LAND ON THE ISLE. TREASURE HUNTERS, MIRACLE SEEKERS, THE HOPELESS...YOU MIGHT HAVE SOME COMPANY ONCE YOU HIT LAND.
SIR? PARDON ME, BUT I THINK YOU SHOULD TIGHTEN THAT BOLT. IF THE VIBRATION OF THE ENGINE LOOSENS IT TOO MUCH, THERE MIGHT BE A SPILL OF OIL AND THE PROPELLER WILL BREAK DOWN.
MY... MY MOTHER WAS...IS... A MECHANIC. SHE... SHE ALWAYS SAID ANYONE COULD LEARN THE LANGUAGE OF MACHINES. YOU JUST HAVE TO LISTEN.
I'LL CHECK ON IT BEFORE IT LAUNCHES.
HALFWOLF.
A GULL JUST DELIVERED A ROYAL ORDER FROM THE BLOOD QUEEN HERSELF. ONE OF HER SHIPS IS APPROACHING. YOU'RE TO WAIT HERE UNTIL IT ARRIVES.
NO.
HA.
JAN. IS THAT SKIFF READY?


YOU SHOULDN'T MAKE THIS ATTEMPT WITHOUT ANOTHER HAND, HALFWOLF.
I'M SURE I SHOULD, CAPTAIN. AND SO ARE YOU.
YOU CAN'T TELL THE BLOOD QUEEN I STOLE YOUR SKIFF IF ONE OF YOUR SAILORS IS WITH ME.
MISS! MASTER REN! PLEASE DON'T GO WITHOUT ME!
JUST LOOKING AT THAT MIST MAKES ME RECONSIDER OUR ALLIANCE.
STAY ON THE SHIP THEN. IT MIGHT BE SAFER... AS LONG AS ANOTHER BOMB DOESN'T GO OFF.
A TEMPTING OFFER...
...AND THEN I REMEMBER THAT NOT A SINGLE NEKOMANCER HAS EVER MANAGED TO SET FOOT ON THE ISLE OF BONES.
I'M COMING BECAUSE I LIKE MAKING THE POETS TALK ABOUT ME...
...AND BECAUSE I SUSPECT YOU MIGHT HAVE NEED OF A CAT BEFORE THIS NONSENSE IS THROUGH.
SPLOOSH
GASP!
OH, NO.


Mother, why did I follow you to this place? Sometimes I do things for you, and later, it is as if I woke from a dream...
KIPPA!
WAIT.
Pleasing you doesn't always seem worth the price of staying alive.
SHE CAN SWIM NOW.
But every time I am near death, I hear your commands...
=GASP!=
...and I fight.
NNHG!
Because you taught me...
...to fear your disapproval more than I fear death.
ONLY A DOG FOLLOWS SOMEONE SO BLINDLY.
IS THAT WHAT YOU ARE? A DOG?
=SNFF=
=HUFF=
=HUFF=
=HUFF=
Should I thank you?
=SNFF=
=SNFF=
STOP CRYING.
STOP CRYING OR I'LL THROW YOU BACK INTO THE SEA.


Mother Wolf, you called yourself.
I'M SORRY, MISS. BUT I DIDN'T WANT TO BE LEFT BEHIND.
I PROMISE I WON'T SLOW YOU --
What does a wolf teach her pups but teeth and hunger?
You didn't make me in your image.
-- MMPH.
You made me into something worse.
I have to know what that is.
THE REPORTS SAID THAT THE MIST SMELLS LIKE CHARRED BONES.
I MUST TELL THE ARCHIVISTS THAT IT SMELLS MORE LIKE CHARRED ASS.
I have to know why you wanted me to survive.
Did I matter to you?
MAIKA IS RIGHT, THOUGH... IT WAS FOOLISH OF YOU TO FOLLOW. YOU COULD HAVE DROWNED.
I NEED TO BE THERE, MASTER REN. I NEED TO BE WITH YOU BOTH. DON'T ASK ME HOW I KNOW. IT'S LIKE... A VOICE INSIDE MY HEAD.
Please let that be true, no matter what I find in this place.
I'd follow that possibility anywhere.
FEEL NO PAIN. FEEL NO FEAR.
Even to my death.

To Be Continued...

From the archives of the esteemed **Professor Tam Tam**, former First Record-Keeper of the Is'hami Temple, and learned contemporary of Namron Black Claw...

TAKE UP THE SWORD OF JUSTICE!

BE READY FOR HOME DEFENSE! JOIN THE WARLORD'S OWN REGIMENT!

1500 DEAD IN KETTARA

THE COUNCIL OF UBASTI DECLARES WAR ON THE FEDERATION

INVASION

In a single night of violence unlike any seen since the time of the Wolf Wars, Federation troops conducted a surprise attack on Ubasti's most Holy City of Kettara, dropping a storm of bombs that ravaged the city and destroyed almost all of its architectural treasures from the First Age. The famed University of Ketta, home to what was a promising new generation of young Poets, is still burning out of control. Most of its student body is feared dead.

"ON THIS DAY, HUMANS STRUCK A DAGGER INTO THE HEARTS OF CATS EVERYWHERE. WE SHALL HAVE OUR REVENGE."
– Nekomancer Thorna Shatterclaw

FEDERATION RESUMES ATTACKS AS CUMAEAN DEFECTORS MEET WITH DUSK COURT

IN A DARING ESCAPE THAT ALMOST ENDED IN CAPTURE, THREE CUMAEAN WITCH-NUNS HAVE BEEN SMUGGLED ACROSS THE WALL BY EDENITE SYMPATHIZERS.

Rumored to be aeronautical engineers from the Cumaean stronghold in Constantine, their presence has already stirred up controversy, from those who fear they are spies, and from others who anticipate the Dusk Court will not share any scientific intelligence with its allied Dawn Court.

MONSTRESS FAN ART

Send letters & fan art to: **monstress.comic@gmail.com**!
#Monstress on Twitter and Instagram!

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Twitter: @TheAstralGypsy

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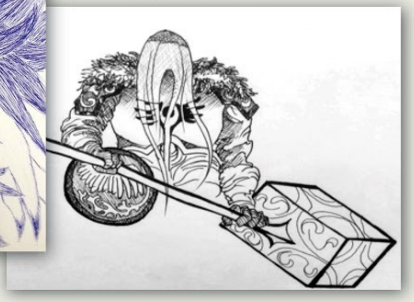
Art by: **Chloe Cudmore**

Art by: **Tami Veldura www.tamiveldura.com**



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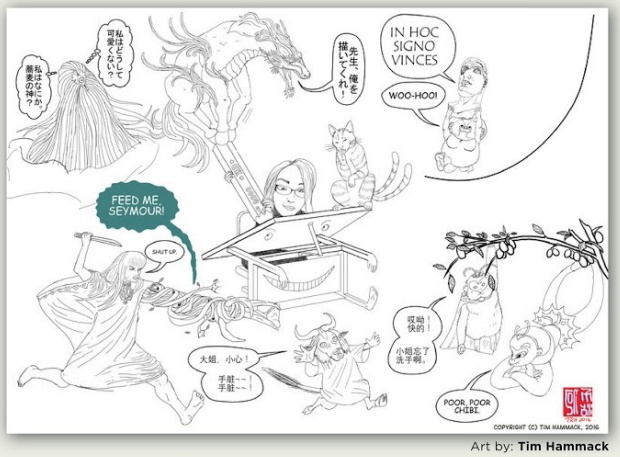

Art by: **Tim Hammack**

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